The Ledges---Nature's Dreamland

Carl Fritz Henning
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester

Part of the Forest Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/amesforester/vol13/iss1/6

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ames Forester by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
The Ledges---Nature’s Dreamland

By Carl Fritz Henning

Of Iowa’s many bits of rare scenery, none excell in picturesque beauty the Ledges. It is a rugged region full of life, romance and legend; a bit of wildness, that has a marvelous wealth of scenic witchery; an enchanting rock-walled valley of peace and harmony, through which flow woodland streams and babbling brooks, playfully leaping over rocks and boulders.

“Little brook—though on thou wilt go
Singing till many years have rolled
Away, alas, never will I know
The mysteries thou wouldst unfold.”

In this “ancient sand-filled valley”, the wearied and worn may listen to the murmuring waters, and sweet woodland songsters and find amid the solitudes of the trees, a rest that is real and a beauty that charms.

The Ledges are old, very old—older than the hills. The story of their origin runs back of the days when glaciers slipped across Iowa—back to the times when a great sea covered our land. The inspiring sandstone walls, sculptured rocks and crags, grow in beauty and sublimity as the cycles of eternity roll silently on—their fame is securely enshrined on the scroll of destiny. Ever eloquent in their Creator’s praise, they reach out a beckoning hand to the lover of the wild-wood, and the people of Iowa. The splendor of the wooded hills, the grandeur of the ancient walls of sandstone, to which cling ivy, mosses, lichen and ferns; the beauty and rich colors of the hepatica, Dutchman’s breeches, blood-root, violet and cumbine, nestling on the crags; the laughing brook and singing birds; the beautiful blue sky and fleecy white clouds—these glories of Nature make us bow in reverence and say with Schiller,

“O wunderschon ist Gottes Erde,
Und schon auf ihr ein Mensch zu sein”.

For many years, as far back as the memory of the oldest settler goes, has the area known as the “heart of the Ledges” been used by the residents of this community as a picnic ground, a place for rest and recreation. Here the early pioneers and their families gathered from miles around to enjoy the seclusion of this natural parkland. The older folks to meet their friends and neighbors, to rest and swap
I

THE AMES FORESTER

stories; the young people to roam among the hills and hear the birds sing; the little ones to wade and play in the babbling brook, in the wild spirit that the dusky redman's children of long ago enjoyed this identical stream—yes, with the same gratification that our little lads and lassies of today have playing in this mountain stream, that is the joy and life of the Ledges. Dr. L. H. Pammel of the Iowa State College visited the Ledges over a quarter of a century ago, and was the pioneer in bringing Nature Study classes to this botanical wonderland. A few years ago this little beauty spot was the camping ground of the Boy Scouts, and in later years the area was used by the Camp Fire Girls for their annual summer camp.

In this beautiful valley, "Nature sits enthroned to dispense her choicest gifts". The mere mention of the park name, "The Ledges", brings visions of birds, flowers, the aroma of the woods, and sends a thrill of pleasure and expectancy through the heart of every lover of "God's great outdoors"—awakening sweet memories of happy days spent in "The Ledges, Nature's Dreamland", that nestles so peacefully among the glacial hills in the heart of Iowa.

There are probably few areas in our state where there is a greater contrast in the physical features and flora than there is between the rich rolling prairies of the upland, and the rugged hills, steep ravines, weathered rock walls and crags of the Ledges, and Des Moines river valleys. In this alluring valley the tenants of the wood live among the old forest trees—trees that are growing in their own natural way, just as Nature ordained, stretching out their leafy arms toward you and inviting you to come among them—it is the "call of the wild". Can you resist the silent invitation?

There is so much mystery about the old forests that crown the hills and line the banks of the Des Moines.

And does not old Pan sit by the river somewhere, gazing at his own grey beard, and the dark shadows dancing on the waters? And the little fairies who paint the summer flowers and autumn leaves—are they not there also?

Show me a scene more inspiring, more inviting, than the primeval trees growing sociably from the same soil along the banks of the Des Moines.

"A brotherhood of venerable trees", Great men have loved and praised the trees and every class of literature has done them honor. The names of many trees have gone down to immortality on the pages of history.

Among the interesting trees growing within the Ledges Park area may be mentioned two elms: one, the "Memorial
Elm”, that stands guard on the west bank of the Des Moines, and the other, known as the “Old Bent Elm”, that welcomes you with outstretched arms in the heart of the Ledges. The Memorial Elm is a real monarch of the forest, measuring over twenty feet in circumference. It takes four men, with hands clasped, to reach around the trunk; it is the largest and oldest tree in the Ledges park, its age having been estimated at 250 years, and should be enrolled among the memorial trees of Iowa. The proud old patriarch rears his head high above his companions, calmly viewing the ever changing landscape.

Almost within the shadow of this venerable elm nestle three Indian mounds—

“Here sleep well the tenant
Of that silent mound,
Their names forgot,
Their memories unrenowned”—

Who they were and where they came from, none can say. The Des Moines river valley, where they found their home—their long home—keeps silence. The stars that they knew look down upon their graves and make no sign. Their memory has faded from the earth. None might know that they had ever lived, were it not for the dim tradition, connecting them with the ancient history of this old hemisphere of ours, that we are wont to deem so new. For this is one of the strange burial grounds of the mound-builders—others contend that the interesting sepulchres contain only the remains of the American Indian.

All we know is that these ancient dwellers of the valley are—

“Awaiting that supreme hour when this mortality shall put on immortality”. Here in the mystic environment of the Ledges hills they sleep and rest in peace. What an interesting story the old tree and these ancient mounds could tell us. Let us turn back the pages of history, two hundred and fifty years, the year this old elm pushed through Iowa’s virgin soil to reach the sunlight.

If a true estimate has been made of the age of the tree, then it was a seedling the year that the missionary, Father Marquette, and his companion, the woodsman Louis Joliet, skirted the eastern shore of Iowa on their momentous voyage of discovery.

One hundred and thirty years later, the beautiful valley wherein this stately elm first saw the light of day, was purchased by the United States from France, and in the
memorable year when we declared our independence, the venerable tree had reached a life-span of over one and one-half centuries.

Through the fleeting years of the dim past, the old elm has witnessed the coming of the Indian, and his passing down the river of Time, to the great beyond; it has seen the drama of life enacted by adventurers, voyagers, explorers, fur-traders, frontiersmen, and pioneers down to our own time. The old elm can confirm the great part the Des Moines river played in the early transportation problem—from the time “the earliest fur-traders ascended the river to trade with the Indians propelling their 'keel boats' by the laborious process of poling these slow-moving crafts—to the year 1859, the year that the river steamboats, the Charley Rogers and De Moine Belle, made their last trip to Fort Dodge.”

Does this noble tree, and its interesting life history—

“A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;”

mean anything to us? I think it does. “It is said of the Druids that the oak was their symbol on earth of the Supreme Being, and that the mistletoe, when found growing thereon, represented man, a creature entirely dependent on God for support and yet an individual existence of his own.” What a beautiful illustration here of the influence of trees on the human mind and character.

The river is encroaching dangerously near to where the elm stands—year after year, the water’s edge creeps closer, ruthlessly nearer, still nearer. Trees are the oldest living thing in the world—each old tree represents a page of history and the dead leaves are the dust of unread, buried volumes.

Most people love trees, but—

“Only God can make a tree.”

So let us love this old elm, and protect the historic tree and its surroundings, to the end that the old patriarch and his fellows may be preserved for posterity.

The “Old Bent Elm” has a different story to tell—although not so old by fifty years, as the memorial elm, its life history, filled with tragedy, is equally interesting.

As a seedling it pushed through the sandy Ledges soil, about the time that the first newspaper was published in New York—that was two hundred years ago; the elm was
stripling seven years old when Washington was born. In youth its graceful branches protected and shaded the dusky warrior; it weathered many storms. Strong of limb and straight as an arrow, it defied the wind, but one day in the very prime of life, while battling bravely against the fury of the elements, the tree was torn and thrown to the ground.

Nature is cruel, stern and uncompromising, but "fairer mistress never swayed the heart of man," and deep in her friendship glows a just and beautiful spirit—

So, in the course of time, the eroding soil of the hills cuddled closer and closer to the trunk of the injured tree, as if in sympathy with the fallen monarch of the forest. The friendly soil, beneficial rain, and life-giving sunshine, encouraged the elm to renewed activities; it took a firmer hold on life by sending new roots deep down into the soil, throwing all its strength into a single branch. Today, the "Old Bent Elm's" prostrate trunk is a mere hollow shell, burnt and scarred by fire, but the lone limb has grown into a stately tree, apparently as vigorous as any of the trees in the valley. Gentle breezes playing through the spreading branches, whisper the elm's message of good cheer, that seems to say to us—"if old and bent before your time, as I have been, be brave, do not surrender; have faith, take courage, start where you fell down—victory will be your reward."

Life is a struggle for existence—days filled with sunshine and shadow. The following lines seem appropriate on seeing the Old Bent Elm in the Ledges:

"Is it, as plainly in our living shown
By slant and twist, which way the Wind hath blown?"

At the foot of the old elm, winds a spring-fed stream, known as "Pease Branch." It is an interesting stream, and was named after John Pea, who with his family and the John Hull family were the first settlers to locate near the Ledges, coming here in the summer of 1846. When the raid on the Lott family was made by the Sioux chief, Si-dom-i-na-dotah, at the mouth of Boone river, in December 1846, John Pea was one of the men who went to the rescue.

The early pioneers were confronted with many difficulties—one of the most serious being the long distance they had to haul the grain in order to get it ground into breadstuffs. The flour mill at Oskaloosa was a hundred miles from the Ledges, and frequently it would take three weeks to make the round trip. Hominy and potatoes were often substitutes for bread.

In the early fifties or thereabouts, a dam was constructed across Pease Branch, and a grist mill built, at a point
a short distance south from where the stream passes the north boundary line of the Ledges Park. The settlers from far and near brought wheat and corn to the mill in the valley and had it ground into flour and corn meal. The pioneers were usually well supplied with meat and wild-food. Elk, deer, wild turkey, grouse and prairie chickens being plentiful.

When you see Pease Branch in its playful mode, it does not seem as if the little creek could furnish enough power to operate a grist-mill—but the stream did furnish the water-power for the old mill, and did it well. Very few park visitors have ever seen this wonderful stream at work. They only know it as a laughing, playful brook idly playing among the rocks—but you should see the stream after a heavy rain-storm, when the little brooklets in the ravines fill to overflowing, rushing their muddy waters down into the valley to join Pease Branch.

What a wonderful change—yesterday a silvery brook, murmuring in its

"Shallow bed of rocks and pebbles
Winding down among the hills."

today a raging torrent five feet deep—the swift waters rushing and roaring through the valley, uprooting trees and carrying them on its angry bosom as if they were light as chips; awakening and rolling rocks and boulders that have slumbered in their bed of gravel since the glaciers carried them down from the far north; leaping over the larger rocks with the ease and grace of a leopard and lashing the angry waters into foam.

Loud, vivid zig-zagging flashes of lightning bounding from cliff to crag add grandeur to the scene, while the rumbling thunder rolls and echoes among the hills as if Old Rip Van Winkle was playing at "a game of nine pin" with the elves and gnomes in the valley.

Nearly every year fragments of ledge-rock, that have been loosened by the action of trickling water or roots working into the crevices; by thawing and freezing in winter, finally let go and drop to the stream below. Some years ago a large sandstone rock that had fallen into the creek below "Table Rock," measuring approximately ten feet in length, four feet in width and three feet in thickness, was during a freshet carried by the swollen stream a distance of three hundred feet before it lodged against an equally large but harder rock lying in the creek bed, the fragments that broke off after the impact continuing down stream. A cubic foot of water weights 62.5 pounds and weight of sand-
stone is about 2.5 times that of water. You can get an idea of the tremendous power of the gentle Ledges stream, when it is in an angry mood, and obtain an estimate of the weight of the rock that was hurled down stream, by multiplying the number of cubic feet it contained by 156.

Pease Branch is a real mountain stream—it has a fall of sixty odd feet, from the time that it enters the parkland until it empties into the Des Moines river, a distance of one and one quarter miles. The creek began its career over the ancient sandstone-filled valley and has by its busy erosion exposed the old sandstone, carving it into forms of massive grandeur.

Whether there was any creek here in pre-Wisconsin time is not known—so it seems that all of this work of etching out the beautiful valley through two hundred feet of drift and rock was done in the few thousand years since the melting away of the last of the glaciers. The scenery along the stream is inspiring, and it is worth anyone’s time to follow its rambling course through the valley.

Let us start from the north end of the park, where the old grist-mill stood—from this historic spot the creek winds and swings in graceful lines between the hills, passing the old McGaw homestead, a tumble-down shack, around which early history clings. The road that crosses Pease Branch at this point was quite an important road at one time; it is the old stage-road between Fort Dodge and Des Moines, the highway of the early pioneers that settled in Iowa in ’49, through whose courage and patience under adverse conditions, the foundation was laid for the greatest state in the union, Iowa, our beautiful Iowa.

During every freshet Pease Branch carries large quantities of the famous red clay that crops out from the hill and creek banks across the stream from the old McGaw home. This clay is nature’s “beauty clay” and one of the finest modeling clays in Iowa. There are also blue clay deposits in the valley. The Campfire Girls, that formerly camped in the Ledges have used the red clay for making book-ends, candlesticks, and other useful and ornamental articles of the ceramic art. The log cabin that was recently built in the park, near the “Old Stone Face,” is chinked with Ledges red clay. Further down the valley, Pease Branch washes and hugs “Redwing Rock,” so named because the sandstone cliff is beautifully colored by the trickling water that seeps over the red clay deposit on the slopes above the weathered wall. After leaving this interesting point, the creek winds and plays through the “Indian Council” area—passes “Sentinel Rock”, and is here joined by Davis creek, a woodland
stream that winds through Davis valley, a beautiful valley filled in springtime with the sweet odor of wild-crab, hawthorn, and plum.

Clasped hand in hand, in wildwood glee, the two woodland streams laugh and play, swinging around the bend they throw a great bank of fine white sand on one side of the creek; dip under the reindeer lichen covered stonewall, below "Devil's Cave," skip over the boulder-strewn bed of the creek and swing in a rainbow circle past the beautiful woods where the artesian well, with its ever flowing mineral water springing from the depths below, provides park visitors with clear and cold drinking water. After peeping into "Mermaid's Cove" below the north slope of "Reindeer Ridge," the children of the woodland waters are separated for a moment by a narrow strip of land, a miniature island —turning to right and left, playing and rippling over the sand and rocks. The waters again join where the valley trail crosses the stream on stepping stones, and as if afraid to romp alone they wander on with hands more firmly clasped, hugging the weathered sandstone wall from which the so-called "petrified tree" protrudes in bold relief.

Playing for a while among the great rocks that are strewn in wild confusion around "Pocahontas' Pool"—leisurely passing on by "Angel's Cave," going ever onward, they tarry for a moment to bask in the sunshine and shadows below "Table Rock," the Sphinx of the Ledges. With ever increasing speed they hasten on laughing and leaping in joyful glee as they come to the log cabin, the park custodian's lodge, that nestles on the bank of the stream, at the foot of Reindeer Ridge—then murmuring a fond farewell to the Ledges, they play for a moment along the willow-lined stream, their soothing voices blending sweetest harmony with the singing birds, as the waters of the wondrous valley streams join and mingle with the Des Moines, the "River of the Monks."

There are many interesting trails and paths in the Ledges. Originally some of the paths were no doubt made by Nature's surveyors, the cows; others may have been Indian trails, or perhaps the game trail of elk and deer. The trail appeals to the park visitor—be he tourist, camper, fisherman, nature-lover, even poet of the outdoor world.

The Ledges hill-trails take you where the heart of nature beats. The one along Reindeer Ridge affords a most excellent view of Pease and Davis valleys—they take you to "Inspiration Point" above "Katina Falls" at the lower Ledges, from which point of vantage a splendid view may be
had of the Des Moines river valley to the northwest; they take you to "Riverview Heights" above the "Old Indian Spring," the wooded hills and winding river presenting a panoramic view of supreme splendor. The "Valley Trail," with its grand trees and rock-strewn streams; weathered caves and sculptured rocks; shady ravines and sunny glens; registration booths and stepping stones, is the most used trail in the Ledges.

Along the trails and hidden in the foliage, swinging on the boughs to which their nests and hopes are knit, are the woodland songsters, the little souls we love; their sweet songs awaken lost memories, quickening the flow of the gypsy blood coursing through our veins. The lure of a trail, whether it winds through the valley, over the hills, or into the fern-dells of the deep woods, haunted with long shadows and lances of golden sunlight slanting earthward—it is always enchanting, you cannot shake its wild control, the end lays in mystery beyond the hills—and yet a trail may lead nowhere, but who can question its fleeting, interrogative beauty?

"Let your footsteps wander where they will—at any time of the year, during any display of the elements, the song of the trail is deep. And the trail is a friendly thing. It has a naive independence, is shyly confidential, and wanders off to become utterly lost as to time and place and destination."

It winds in graceful lines past the lair of the wolf; the den of the red fox and the underground home of the woodchuck; it pokes into remote corners of the park, wandering blithely down the wooded slopes of little ravines, prowls along the very edge of high stonewalls, into caves and crevices where it seeks intimately the secrets of the ancient rocks, and suddenly vanishes into thin air.

"Such surprises it has furnished, little incidents and dramas of wild life that remain in our memory for many years, little views of landscape and seasonal beauty that haunt latter days." Many birds make their home in the Ledges, and every day is a good day to study them—true we may see more birds on some days than others, but why should that disappoint us? One of the most fascinating things about field work, is its delightful uncertainty. You never know what's in store for you as you start out; you never can tell what will happen next; surprises are always in order, and excitement is continually whetted on the chances of the varied chase. Then again, the fewer birds we meet at a time the better are our chances to become intimately acquainted with their daily life. Although every
day is a good day to study birds, not all birds can be found at any one time or place. Some come about your camp to tell their stories unasked. Others spring up before you as you stroll in the meadow, "like the flowers that enticed the feet of Proserpine." Birds flit by you as you follow the trails and woodland paths. They disport overhead at hide-and-seek with the foliage as you loiter in the shade of the forest, and their music now answers the sigh of the tree-tops, now ripples an echo to the voice of the brook.

The cardinals, rose-breasted grosbeak, scarlet tanager sing among the branches of the forest monarch; the Baltimore oriole hangs his cradle to the drooping branches of the largest tree, where the gentle breezes and swaying branches can lull the baby birds to sleep; the cuckoo and morning dove build in wild-crab and other small trees; the brown thrasher, catbird, towhee and Indigo-bunting prefer the thickets; the phoebe hides its lichen covered nest under an overnanging ledge-rock; the blue-gray gnatcatcher and ruby-throated hummingbird saddle their beautiful homes on a branch; the wood-thrush loves the deepest forest; the Louisiana water-thrush the shady fern-covered glen and babbling brook; the American red-start, gold-finch and yellow warbler enjoy the willow-lined streams, and so does the pretty Maryland yellow-throat—

"There's magic in that small bird's note
See there he flits—a yellow throat;
A living sunbeam, tipped with wings,
A spark of light that charms and sings
Witchery—witchery—witchery."

Along the valley trail, a pair of Maryland yellow-throats built their pretty nest in a willow that leaned so close to the path that anyone crossing the stream, where the stepping stones are, could easily look into the swaying nest and see the four pretty creamy white eggs, spotted, blotched and lined with brown and lilac of varying shades. Look—

"Who's coming now across the brook!
A woodland maid all robed in white—
The leaves dance round her with delight,
The stream laughs out beneath her feet—
Sing, merry bird, the charms complete,
"Witchery—witchery—witchery!"

An interesting bird to meet along the creek is the Belt-ed Kingfisher, he goes a fishing up and down the stream, while the little green heron is content to stand in the shal-
low water for an hour at a time; the Turkey buzzard and Red-tailed hawk, monarchs of the air, soar high above the valley; while the warbling blue-birds, cheerful black-capped chickadees and saucy wren welcome us everywhere along the trails.

One of the familiar and interesting bird notes on a summer evening is the call of the whippoorwill. Silent during the day their oft repeated “whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will” may be heard far into the night.

In the fall of the year when—

“October frosts have chilled the air
And turned the leaves to gold and red,”

Nature paints wonderful pictures in the Ledges valley; the leaves of the forest are constantly changing through the chemistry of sunshine, air, rain and frost, from the refreshing green of summer to the gold and red of autumn; the daily glories of sunrise are repeated at evening in the sunset glow.

The birds from the northland are arriving—slate-colored juncos, tree sparrows, white throats, white-crowned sparrows, purple finch, red-poll linnets and wandering bands of wax-wings.

After the leaves have fallen it is surprising how many bird secrets bare limbs tell—little bird homes among the branches that you never suspected were there.

But in winter, how changed the Ledges are then! The wild comes out—yet how silent and somber; reposeful and grand! How different from the gay abode of myriad bright-eyed, happy-hearted campers, tourists, visitors, who but a few short weeks before were romping like children—some of them white headed with the burden of years, but with the hearts of children still—others hiking along the valley trails and paths, clambering along rock trails into caves, or to the heights of its glorious old hills, living lives filled with sweet content and general delight. The Ledges appeal to the nature-lover in winter. A tramp through the valley, along the trails and ice-bound streams, through white forest lands is interesting and full of surprises.

Thoreau says “though winter is represented in the almanac as an old man, facing the wind and sleet, and drawing his cloak about him, we rather think of him as a merry wood-chopper, and warm blooded youth, as blithe as summer

What fire could ever equal the sunshine of a winter’s day, when the meadow mice come out by the wall-sides, and the chickadee lisps in the defiles of the wood? The warmth comes directly from the sun, and is not radiated from the
earth, as in summer; and when we feel his beams on our backs as we are treading some snowy dell, we are grateful for his special kindness, and bless the sun which has followed us into that by-path."

If one would learn the innermost secrets of the wildlife in the Ledges valley, let him go forth after a snowstorm has covered the earth with an immaculate mantle of glistening whiteness—there he will find recorded a true and exhaustive account of out-door happenings. Along the highways, across the fields, and at the edge of the woods you trail the familiar tracks of the little cottontail rabbit. About the small clumps of swaying weedstalks are the prints of cardinals, snowbirds, and red-poll linnets or we may cross the tracks of quail.

Over the white woodland snow wind the interesting, delicately traced trails of the little cerod mice. At the base of some forest tree is recorded the jump of the gray squirrel and his cousin the fox squirrel—here they searched for acorns and nuts hidden beneath the snow. The cunning red fox is a resident of the valley—Reynard's bark can often be heard at night as he ranges along Reindeer Ridge, the hillcrest on which the reindeer lichen grows; a plant that covers immense areas in the Arctic regions, but is of rare occurrence in Iowa.

The recent track of the fox winding through the woods "remind us that each hour of the night is crowded with events." From the clean, sharp tracks left on the snow one can readily imagine the shy red fellow daintily placing those tireless black feet, as he roams through his favorite hunting grounds. There is one lone wolf den in the Ledges. The skunk is one of the handsomest animals that roam meadow and woodland; raccoons are increasing rapidly; badgers are rarely seen; but the oppossum can be picked up most anywhere.

The woodchuck, nature's "weather prophet," is a real economist—he escapes the hardships of winter without going to Florida or California, and at the same time stops all expenses by simply curling up in his underground den—the Ledges are good enough for Mr. Woodchuck. The mink, prowler of the woods, enjoys the woodland streams; muskrats are abundant along the river, and the weasels are now clothed in fur to match the glistening snow. The smaller dwellers of the woods are represented by the moles, mice, voles and shrews.

In the Ledges valley there are already signs of returning spring. The mating moon of the great-horned owls rises over the hills large and round, illuminating the valley with
its golden light, casting delicate tree-tracings upon the glis-
tening snow. The great-horned owls, the largest of our rap-
tores often go to housekeeping in February. Soon the spir-
it of the gentle southwind will call, and the robins and blue
birds will come back to us from sunny climes.

The Ledges welcome you to come to this wonderland, with
the returning birds, to witness the awakening of spring and
wildwood flowers. Then—

“When the bull frog tunes his drum
And the reel begins to hum—
There’s gladness in the earth’s awakening.”

the perfume of wild crab and plum drifts through the valley;
the birds are singing among the trees, and the cardinals are
calling a hearty welcome to you, your friends and the citi-
zens of Iowa, to visit “The Ledges, Nature’s Dreamland”—
to spend happy days in this valley of sweet restfulness; to
roam in glen and dale along winding river and woodland
streams; to wander among the trees of the forest; to rest
and muse among the ancient moss-covered rocks, and com-
mune with Nature and the Spirit of the Wild.